Black music.
Spoiler alert, you stole it.
[MUSIC] Cultural appropriation is when the majority group deems something thatâ€™s a cultural artifact or a practice of a smaller group as uncivilized or just wrong completely but then find some ways to co-op it and usually make a profit off of it.
And completely disregard it where it comes from.
So, a few fashion weeks ago, I saw white guys walking down the runway with do-rags on which just blew my mind because thatâ€™s what we were wearing to wrap our hair at night to keep our curls looking good and our edges laid.
And here these guys were making a fashion statement, which it didnâ€™t really work but it was also kind of disrespectful, and really depressing.
If I see someone thatâ€™s got some henna on and theyâ€™re like, â€œyeah I just got this done at a street fair, and isnâ€™t it just so cool?â€ And they donâ€™t actually know where it comes from?
Or Indian women doing this for their weddings or what any of the designs mean?
And Iâ€™m going to give you a little side eye and say, â€œI think thatâ€™s appropriation and not appreciation.â€ So I saw this really great analogy for cultural appropriation.
And it says cultural appropriation is like taking a test and getting an F, and then someone else copies off of your test and gets an A plus extra credit.
Be an authentic person.
Do your research.
And know what you are wearing comes from.
The difference between appreciating and appropriating my culture boils down to the level of sincerity and desire to actually learn about it.
Cultural appropriation is definitely not - itâ€™s when someone steals your culture and learns nothing about it, kind of like colonialism.
What I hear when someone says whatâ€™s wrong with cultural appropriation is the Washington Redskins and the Cleveland Indians.
Itâ€™s about legacy and history that you have to recognize.
More likely than not, if you go see Jazz or you know rock and roll or barber shop quartet if you are in the right neighborhood and you are more likely gonna see white people in the audience, white people on stage, which is unfortunate because those are musical styles that have a long long history stemming from you know African American roots.
So itâ€™s not too much a leap to think that 20 years from now when we think about Hip-Hop or go see a Hip-Hop concert or something, the starting point for people is going to be Macklemore as opposed to Kool Herc In my world where I deal video games, cultural appropriation is actually something that you see a lot.
A bad example, for example, is the sort of depiction of Native Americans.
A lot of video games the Tomahawk, for example in the Killer Instinct franchise is sort of this conglomeration of a bunch of different Native American traditions.
But on the plus side thereâ€™s this game came out last year called Never Alone which actually incorporated into a story trying to tell a particular story about a particular place.
That was done by a video game studio in New York City.
But they actually traveled several times to Alaska.
They work with a local Native American counsel to sort of get stories from that particular place.
I think to have that authentic expression that comes from dialogue, doesnâ€™t just come from appreciation.
You can appreciate something from afar.
Until you actively engage with it, you find that people from that place that just makes the thing you are appreciating that much deeper, that much richer.
Someone adopts an element of another personâ€™s culture more as an accessory not because they love and appreciate that culture.
I think of stealing and robbing, ridiculing, profiting.
You canâ€™t put on a baseball cap or a long golden medallion or baggy pants and all of a sudden become cool.
Itâ€™s pretty offensive.
Objectively, cultural appropriation is largely based on economics.
But you know Timberlands and cut off cargo pants, we re-appropriated that from preppy white friends.
You could say cultural appropriation has been happening for thousands of years.
A really good friend of mine Kien Liu put together an art show about Freedom.
I've always been fascinated with the signage of Jim Crow culture.

Whatâ€™s interesting about the sign is that majority of the people when they see it, reads as white only because you don't ever see the black establishment sign, you always see white only.
In the early 90s, a good friend of mine said â€œHey, Russel Simmons wants to start a clothing company, he's looking for a designer."
So we thought itâ€™d be cool to make a brand based in the city that was somewhat parody and or influenced on the whole Polo Country concept and we decided to call it Phat Farm, they were the first big street-wear brand that morphed into this whole urban craze.
I think when it comes down to the N word, people donâ€™t understand that how many millions of people died just to survive, just to exist as human beings.
As black folks, all of us have used it as a term of endearment.
A lot of suburban white kids dropping the N word.
That's where it gets dangerous.
Personally, I can be frustrated with youth, but I canâ€™t be angry with youth for not knowing.
And itâ€™s cyclical.
Itâ€™s very interesting to watch it happen in contemporary pop culture just even the term Rock and Roll was invented by black people like in the 20s/30s term and Rock and Roll came out of Jazz, purely, undeniably.
A lot of people didnâ€™t realize that even music was publicly segregated.
If you had a jukebox and it was a white soda shop, it was only allowed to play white music.
I think if you donâ€™t know the history of things, I feel like thereâ€™s a certain level of appreciation and enjoyment that you might not experience.
Knowing your history as opposed to not knowing your history.
I think if you really care about people and where they come from and respecting them, then youâ€™ll do the work.
You want to be a nice cool person right?
I think when you just kind of blindly grab something because you just think itâ€™s cool; it kinda makes you seem like a sellout.